

Arizona Supreme Court
Administrative Office of the Courts
Dependent Children's Services Division
Dependency Case Processing Initiative Grant

**Fiscal Year 2017 and FY 2018
Gila County Application & Budget Request**


The purpose of this DCPI Grant is to assist the Juvenile Court, over a two-year grant cycle, in improving outcomes for children involved in dependency matters by *expediting permanency and safely reducing the number of children in care*. The funding amount for this initiative is calculated based on the number of children in your county with an open petition as of January 1, 2016. Gila County's budget total for this initiative is \$18,980.

Submitted by


Name, Title

9/19/16
Date

Approved by


Honorable Timothy M. Wright, Presiding Juvenile Judge

9/20/16
Date

**Arizona Supreme Court
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Project Plan**

Please provide a plan detailing how these funds will be used to safely expedite permanency for children in care. Your plan should include how you will identify and track those in your targeted population. You should also estimate how many children you anticipate will be effected by this initiative and how you will track the success of your efforts.

The Juvenile Dependency Court of Gila County intends to utilize Dependency Surge Funding to pilot and potentially establish a Progress Conference Program. The goal is to safely expedite permanency through intensive case management programming designed to promote positive participation in reunification services by parents.

Currently, the Juvenile Dependency Bench conducts "Report and Review" Hearings on a compressed ninety (90) day scheduling cycle. Under the Progress Conference pilot, a Progress Facilitator, acting under the authority of A.R.S. 8-846(C), would conduct the first Progress Conferences approximately thirty (30) days after the Preliminary Protective Hearing; all subsequent Conferences would then occur at regular forty-five (45) day intervals between the Report and Review Hearings and again before any Permanency Hearing.

At the Progress Conferences, the Progress Facilitator would meet with the parents, a designee from the Dept. of Child Safety if possible, and, should they elect to participate, attorneys appointed to parties in the given matter. Local service providers will also be encouraged to attend. The tenor of the Conference would be informal in nature to provide a setting open to efforts of collaboration.

The Facilitator would be appointed at the time of Preliminary Protective Hearing and provided the authority to issue scheduling documents and prepare reports.

The focal point of the Progress Conference is to assist parents in their efforts to execute a reunification case plan; this would be accomplished by 1) providing an educational element to Dependency Caseload participants and, importantly, to parents; 2) directly aiding parents in scheduling or participating in services through an action plan; and 3) systemic reporting to court and counsel detailing the results of the Conference.

In order to successfully develop an action plan, parents would likely benefit from a general understanding of procedural implications and participation requirements. Once this baseline is established, the Facilitator could directly aid parents in executing the actions by facilitating provider contacts, scheduling service appointments, and afterwards apprising parties of the progress through regular reporting. Parents will be provided with a three ring binder (with calendar and notes) to help keep their resource materials and reunification activities organized. With the Facilitator bridging any gap between DCS or service providers, parents will know exactly what is expected of them and have some real help in staying with the reunification case plan. The Facilitator would also file the Progress Reports into the court record. The Progress Report would detail who appeared for the Progress Conference, the general results of the activities, and any agreements made.

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While the Progress Conference is not intended to assess alternative permanency solutions, if an obvious, appropriate solution such as a Title 8 Guardianship or a Title 25 action is discussed, the Facilitator would report that information to the Court and counsel.

The Program would be piloted in Globe with every other filed petition being diverted onto the Progress Conference track. The projected total impact would see approximately 12-14 cases transferred into the Program in FY17 with funding for an additional 4-6 cases in FY18; given current case averages, approximately 30 children in southern Gila County could be positively effected.

Although DCS caseworkers and attorneys work with parents routinely as obligated, the organization of the Progress Conference Program would provide an informal and helpful compliment to the current process. Expedited permanency through family reunification is the desired outcome; by providing this comprehensive support structure we can improve our case management to align with this goal and limit recidivism by parents.

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Performance Measures

Identify what data indicators you will use to determine whether your Project Plan outcomes are successful. Data indicators need to be collected at the beginning and throughout the grant cycle. Please include data indicators such as how many cases closed last year and how many you anticipate closing in each year of the grant cycle (FY17 and FY18). This should include the permanency outcome (Return home, relative placement, severance, adoption, etc. Please note that cases in which a child turns 18 and exists the system is not considered as achieving permanency and that you will be required to provide updates on all data indicators at regular grant reporting intervals.

In order to determine the impact to Permanency, Progress Conference pilot cases will be primarily measured against two values: 1) Baseline Time to Permanency; and 2) Time to Permanency of non-Progress Conference Cases.

Baseline Time to Permanency: 551 days. By measuring the length, in days, between removal date and close of the case, a Baseline Time to Permanency value has been established for the period of 1/1/2015 and 8/27/16. This date coincides with local changes in bench assignment and process and accurately describes our current result. Progress Mediation pilot cases would record the length of time with the same parameters for comparison against current performance.

FY17 / FY18 Time to Permanency Comparison: Beginning with FY17 Globe-based dependency petitions, both pilot and non-pilot cases will have Time to Permanency values measured for side-by-side comparison and analysis.

Progress Conference Statistics: Additionally, data capture will be initiated to monitor the activities of the Progress Facilitator and the Progress Conferences – such information will include 1) the number of conferences held, 2) number of parents appearing (total), 3) number of reports generated, 4) number of scheduling contacts made, and 5) number of Progress Reports generated.

Permanency Outcome Statistics: The total number of closed cases, with individual permanency outcomes recorded, will be compiled and maintained for FY16 (baseline comparator), FY17, and FY18.

All of these performance measures can be reported on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual basis as required.

All purchases of equipment will be documented and recorded.

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Personnel -Fiscal Year 2017

Job Position	FTE	Salary	ERE %	ERE \$	Total Request
N/A				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
Total	0.00	\$0	NA	\$0	\$0

Note: Please attach a description which includes the title and responsibilities of each position funded under this request.

Personnel -Fiscal Year 2018

Job Position	FTE	Salary	ERE %	ERE \$	Total Request
N/A				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
				\$0	\$0
Total	0.00	\$0	NA	\$0	\$0

Note: Please attach a description which includes the title and responsibilities of each position funded under this request.

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Contract Services - Fiscal Year 2017

Vendor Type	Hourly Cost	Total Hours	Total Request
Professional Legal Services (Facilitator)			\$12,000
			\$0
			\$0
			\$0
			\$0
Total			\$12,000

Please describe the role of each contracted service funded under this request. - See attachment.

Contract Services - Fiscal Year 2018

Vendor Type	Hourly Cost	Total Hours	Total Request
Professional Legal Services (Facilitator)			\$6,000
			\$0
			\$0
			\$0
			\$0
Total			\$6,000

Please describe the role of each contracted service funded under this request. - See attachment.

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Equipment- Fiscal Year 2017

Description	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Cost
n/a			\$0
			\$0
			\$0
			\$0
Total	NA	\$0	\$0

Please provide an explanation for all equipment funded under this request.

Equipment- Fiscal Year 2018

Description	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Cost
n/a			\$0
			\$0
			\$0
			\$0
Total	NA	\$0	\$0

Please provide an explanation for all equipment funded under this request.

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Travel - Fiscal Year 2017

Type	Cost
N/A	\$0
Total	\$0

If travel funding is requested, please a justification for all travel related expenses.

Travel - Fiscal Year 2018

Type	Cost
N/A	\$0
Total	\$0

If travel funding is requested, please a justification for all travel related expenses.

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Operating - Fiscal Year 2017

Type	Cost
Office Supplies	\$735
Total	\$735

See attachment.

Operating - Fiscal Year 2018

Type	Cost
Office Supplies	\$245
Total	\$245

See attachment.

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Budget Request Summary - Fiscal Year 2017

Category	FTE	Amount
Personnel	0.00	\$0
Contract Services	NA	\$12,000
Equipment	NA	\$0
Travel	NA	\$0
Operating	NA	\$735
Total	0.00	\$12,735

Budget Request Summary - Fiscal Year 2018

Category	FTE	Amount
Personnel	0.00	\$0
Contract Services	NA	\$6,000
Equipment	NA	\$0
Travel	NA	\$0
Operating	NA	\$245
Total	0.00	\$6,245

GILA DCPI - Progress Conference Program

Facilitator Activities

The Gila County Juvenile Dependency Court intends to utilize Dependency Surge Funding to pilot and explore the possibility of establishing a permanent Progress Conference Program. The goal would be to safely expedite permanency through intensive case management programming and promote positive participation in reunification services by parents.

In speaking to Dependency Attorneys, DCS workers, parents, and dependent children, the predominant obstacles preventing permanency are rooted in communication, resources and access.

Under the proposed Progress Conference Program, the Court would appoint a Progress Facilitator who would be responsible for conducting Progress Conferences, objectively assimilating case information, providing parties with support clarification regarding specific services and bridging the education and communication gaps between the parties, agencies and attorneys. The Facilitator will receive all reports, updates, motions and orders on the case by any party or court appointed advocate, Foster Care Review Board etc that are contained within the Court file. The Court would order that the parents and a representative from each of the behavioral health providers be present at a minimum of two progress conferences to be conducted at crucial case intervals. Attorneys would be welcome to attend and so would a representative from the Department of Child Safety.

Initial Progress Conference:

At the first Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting, when the child or children are removed, the Department of Child Safety (DCS) specifies an initial permanency goal that is in the child's best interest and then submits it to the court for approval at the Preliminary Protective Hearing (PPH). However, for obvious reasons at that initial TDM and PPH, all parties have a limited comprehension of all permanency options and the steps that must be taken to effectuate permanency for the child. Usually, the parents and the child(ren) have not had the opportunity to discuss the case meticulously with counsel and discuss all possible permanency options. Often, other possible placements or permanency alternatives have not been thoroughly explored. Additionally, within thirty to sixty (30-60) days the parents are required to have an Adult Recovery Team (ART) meeting, the child is required to have a Child Family Team (CFT) meeting and all parties are supposed to participate a Case Plan Staffing.

However, parents and children are in dependency cases precisely because they have challenges with conformity to social, legal and/or community standards. Consequently, they often have extreme difficulty understanding what is required of them, what resources are available and how to achieve permanency. These families frequently find it difficult to coordinate multiple meetings with unfamiliar agencies or individuals. Parents are often initially overwhelmed by the dependency system and/or bewildered and confused by what is expected of them. Frequently, behavioral health providers, legal counsel and the Department of Child Safety are placed in the position of having to schedule and reschedule multiple appointments with a single parent.

Therefore, to help address this challenge, the Court Appointed Facilitator will conduct an Initial Progress Conference approximately thirty days after the PPH or Initial Hearing to provide additional support to parents at the beginning of a dependency case.

An Initial Progress Conference would increase the chance of an early start for the permanency process. The focus of these meetings would be outlining the specific services, frequencies of service, contact information for service providers and connecting parents with service providers directly. This hands on approach would prevent the inevitable miscommunications and frustrations that ensnare parents, service providers and often DCS in the beginning stages of the permanency process and which are not revealed to the Judge and/or legal counsel until the first report and review hearing

In order to successfully develop an action plan, parents would likely benefit from a general understanding of procedural implications and participation requirements. The Facilitator would present foundational information to the parties about dependency cases. Once this baseline is established, the Facilitator would directly aid parents in executing the actions by facilitating provider contacts, scheduling service appointments, and afterwards apprising parties of the progress through regular reporting.

The Facilitator would provide concrete objectives in a digestible format to the parents in written form at the conclusion of the initial thirty day meeting. The Facilitator will provide a list of resources and, if beneficial, provide a calendar of important dates for the parent to follow. By the end of the initial thirty day meeting, it would be clear to the parents what is expected of them and what the obvious barriers the child(ren) may have to permanency. Alternatives to family reunification may be discussed with the parents in a caucus format or in front of the group. Parents would leave the thirty day meeting with resources and appointments which would best prepare them for success.

At the Initial Progress Conference, the Facilitator would effectively be able to instigate a multidisciplinary approach to minimize the amount of initial meetings that the parents would need to attend. This approach would not only reduce the amount of coordination associated with arranging attendance, but would assist in communication between the parties.

With the Facilitator moderating and bridging any gap between DCS or service providers, parents will know exactly what is expected of them and have some real help in staying with the reunification case plan.

At the conclusion of the meeting or within twenty-four (24) hours afterward, the Facilitator will e-mail or physically provide a copy of the written report to the assigned attorneys, a representative from DCS, an assistant attorney general, behavioral health representative. These reports will be devoid of opinion and serve to inform and foster unbiased communication regarding the status of services.

The Facilitator would file the Progress Reports into the court record. The Progress Report would detail who appeared for the Progress Conference, the general results of the activities, and any agreements made. While not intended to assess alternative permanency solutions, if an obvious, appropriate solution such as a Title 8 Guardianship or a Title 25 action is discussed, the Facilitator would objectively notify the Court and counsel that alternatives were posited.

Progress Conference Checkup:

Currently, the Juvenile Dependency Bench conducts "Report and Review" Hearings on a compressed ninety (90) day scheduling cycle.

Under the current system, at this point in the case, the communication gap between the Department of Child Safety, Service Providers, Parents and Attorneys is particularly strained. The gap in time between the offering of a service and transmittal of the efficacy of that service to the parent's attorney and subsequently to the Court is problematic. The Department of Child Safety frequently has to work with service providers to timely receive reports regarding a parent's progress. Then there is a commonsensical time gap between when the Department of Child Safety receives that information, can process that information and is subsequently able to communicate it to the assigned attorney. The attorney then must attempt to contact the parent and address the issue. However, by the time the attorney receives the information and is able to communicate with the client precious time has elapsed and the information may not still be accurate.

Judges often witness this frustration in Court and it is almost impossible to ascertain what information is accurate. Judges are then unreasonably expected to make life changing rulings based on seemingly contradictory information from what appears to be multiple reliable sources. The situation appears cyclical. The parents often claim that they have difficulty contacting the Department of Child Safety worker and/or the Service Provider. Then the Department of Child Safety explains that there are issues with the Service Provider. Next the Service Provider claims that the issue is with both the parent and the Department of Child Safety. The transfer of fault can be dizzying. The result is that Judges are less likely to have the legal justification to make important decisions regarding permanency and permanency is delayed.

Therefore, at this critical stage, the Facilitator would conduct a Progress Conference Checkup thirty days after the Report and Review Hearing. The Progress Report will outline the current advancement and improvement of the parent with services since the child was removed and/or the initial progress conference. At one hundred and twenty day mark, the parties and the court should have sufficient reliable data to indicate whether a party may need to advocate for a change or acceleration in the permanency plan. The Facilitator will add a level of neutral accountability to this process. The Facilitator will be permitted to add information directly from any reports or pleadings filed by the parties, court appointed advocates, Foster Care Review Board etc that are contained within the Court file.

Again, at the conclusion of the meeting or within twenty-four (24) hours afterward, the Facilitator will e-mail or physically provide a copy of the written report to the assigned attorneys, a representative from DCS, an assistant attorney general, behavioral health representative.

By providing additional support to parents at crucial junctures through increased communication between all parties, objective compilation of case information and ease of access to services, the children in Gila County will achieve expedited permanency.

GILA DCPI - Progress Conference Program

Office Supplies

The Court intends to provide those parents in the pilot program with certain administrative or clerical supplies to assist in organization. The Facilitator's supplies will be used to support the parents' notebooks and to track / record the pilot's results.

Parent's Notebooks (x 40)

- 1.5" or 3" Binder
- Calendar
- Dividers
- Pencil Pouch
- Pens

Facilitator Supplies:

- Copy paper
- Colored paper
- Printer cartridge(s)
- 3 hole punch
- 3" Binder(s) for tracking